

ZOOTOCA VIVIPARA (Common or Viviparous Lizard): GREEN COLOURATION. Reports of green-coloured Common Lizards are fairly well documented. Colin Simms (1970) noted that 30% of the lizard population of the Ayres, Isle of Man, 30% of the lizards on the Lancashire coastal dunes, 25% of those at Newborough Warren, Anglesey, and 15% of those on Strensall Common, Yorkshire, were 'green'. Simms described some specimens found in a park near Ramsay, Isle of Man, as 'approaching the green of the grass they live in'. BHS member Charles Montgomery of Edinburgh (pers. comm.) has had reports of green Common Lizards found near Stranraer, in S.W. Scotland. Although I have been looking at British Common Lizards since 1940, I had never seen a green example until 18th April of this year while monitoring a site that I had first found lizards at in 2000. This site lies roughly six miles north of Dundee, on a road cutting through the Sidlaw Hills, and consists of a small roadside strip of rubble and vegetation covered earth adjacent to the entrance of a quarry, lying at the foot of a south-facing artificial stone cliff, created by the road builders. We saw the green male lizard basking on an old log. Although the head and fore-part of the body was an olive colour, the centre of the dorsal surface was pea green fading to an incredible azure hue at the base of the tail and on the limbs. The animal must have recently sloughed because over and above the azure colour, there was an iridescent turquoise sheen. The darker lateral stripes were a viridien colour and most of the body was less marked than usual, being bereft of spots on the bluish tail base and adjacent lower back. I took what I thought were two distant slide



Green variant of *Zootoca vivipara*. Illustration by author.

photographs, but in my haste I forgot to wind the film on (Shades of Baron Munchausen I can hear you say!). The bluishness of the rear of the animal's body and the base of the tail was a little reminiscent of the turquoise colour that is so often seen in dead specimens of this species, and I was wondering whether the pigment of the epidermis could have been changed either through disease or chemical contamination. David Bird informs me that not only has he heard of green Common Lizards from near Salisbury, but has also seen them himself, showing a turquoise sheen similar to the specimen seen by us. He states that he thinks that this sheen is not caused by pigment, as it changes when seen from different viewpoints; in different lighting conditions, and when photographed. He also states that the change in colour occurring in dead lizards is maybe due to a fairly minor change in the chemical structure of the pigment or a change in chromatophores, as it happens so quickly.

REFERENCE

Simms, C. (1970). *The Lives of British Lizards*.
Norwich: Jarrold & Sons.

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